Thursday, May 8, 2025

Pope Leo XIV

Pope Elected Today

For centuries, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were largely Italians until a cardinal from Poland was elected pope in 1978 and then succeeded by a German and an Argentine.

Now, for the first time, the pope's an American who has taken the name Leo XIV.

And he's from the South Side of Chicago, home of the beleaguered White Sox, the Daley political dynasty and, until they decamped for Washington and eventually the White House, Michelle and Barack Obama.

Prevost, who has spent much of his career ministering in Peru and leading the Vatican’s powerful office of bishops, was born Robert Francis Prevost on Sept. 14, 1955, at what was then called Mercy Hospital, at the corner of South Prairie Avenue and 34th Street.

But while Prevost made his debut in Chicago, his parents and two older brothers were already living just south of the sprawling city in a working-class suburb called Dolton.

Home was a tidy brick house the Prevosts bought new in 1949 on East 141st Place.

Prevost's father, Louis Prevost, served in the Navy during World War II and worked as a superintendent of schools in the south suburbs of Chicago.

The future pope's mother, Mildred Martinez Prevost, was a librarian with a master's degree in education and two sisters who were nuns.

But the focus of the family was St. Mary of the Assumption Parish on 137th Street, which was then a busy church and school that straddled the Chicago/Dolton border.

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